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Scott Report

State Ignored Kidnap Threat

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Negligence by high-placed officials in the State Department apparently is largely responsible for the 3-day kidnaping of Lieutenant Colonel Michael Smolen.

Congressional investigators have been informed that State Department and Central Intelligence Agency authorities were warned by reliable sources at least ten days in advance that Venezuelan Communist terrorists were planning to seize a member of the U.S. embassy staff, probably a military officer.

This warning went unheeded. The congressional probers have been unable to uncover any evidence that either the State Department, Defense Department or CIA did anything about it.

Most perplexing aspect of this distressing bumbling is that Ambassador C. Allan Stewart knew about the threatened Red outrage, but blandly ignored it.

His Caracas' staff was not advised, and no special safeguards were taken to protect them — despite the fact that the warning came from excellent sources, and that last year the Communists abducted Colonel James Chennault, then deputy chief of the U.S. Military Mission, and a Spanish soccer star and held them for nine days. The kidnapers were never run down.

Secretary Rusk, Defense Secretary McNamara and Assistant Secretary of State Thomas Mann, in charge of Latin American Affairs, also knew about the warning. But the congressional investigators have found no indication they did any more about it than Ambassador Stewart.

This astonishing indifference is attributed by State Department insiders to high-level belief that the resolution adopted by the Organization of American States to break relations with Castro has solved the Communist problem.

"Secretaries Rusk and Mann are so exuberant over this OAS resolution," said one veteran Department official, "that they are believing their own statements that this peace of paper will put an end to Communist

terrorist and other activities in Latin America.

"Rusk and Mann are forgetting that the resolution was mainly a face-saver to cover up their failure to induce the OAS to really do something about Communist espionage and subversion. When the intelligence warning came to their desks that the Reds intended to pull off another kidnaping, they just didn't believe it and took no precautions. The blame lies squarely on them."

Backstage sparring between Defense Secretary McNamara and CIA Director John McCone is not improving the circulation of important information in policy-making circles of the Johnson administration.

McNamara, in keeping with his penchant for expanding his authority, is steadily enlarging the size and scope of the Defense Intelligence Agency, which is directly under his control. McCone is not enthusiastic about that — to put it mildly.

He made that pointedly clear in a conference with McNamara at which Secretary Rusk was present.

The Pentagon chief, backed by the head of the State Department, urged McCone to send certain intelligence reports direct to them rather than through the National Security Council as required by law.

"You are working for us," contended McNamara.

"I am working for the President," sharply retorted McCone. That ended the argument.

Backstage relations between the two officials have been cool since the 1962 Cuban missile crisis when McNamara staged his televised press conference on the reputed withdrawal of the Russian nuclear weapons. McCone disapproved of this public airing of intelligence techniques also, because of lack of "hard information" that all the missiles had been removed as Khrushchev promised.

In the closing days of the recent congressional session, House Republican leaders proposed providing Secret Service guards for their presidential ticket but nothing came of the matter because of Democratic objections.

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